

1.0 AIM

The aim of this procedure is determining of assessment principals of written or verbal complaints and appeals arising from organizations or interested sites regarding all programs of USB-PPS¹, which include the entire quality system of USB Certification.

USB-PPS includes the following requirements;

- Requirements defined by accreditation bodies
- Requirements defined by scheme owners
- Requirements defined by authorized bodies
- Compliance criteria defined by legal regulations
- Quality and compliance criteria defined in the policies and procedures of USB Certification
- Authorization requirements

2.0 SCOPE

This procedure covers the disputes that may come from organizations or related parties regarding the control activities / audits and certification decisions carried out by USB Certification, objection and complaint coming, if necessary documenting, implementing the corrective, preventive action and informing the related parties about the result.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

General Manager (GM), Certification Manager of relevant department (provided that he/she has not been assigned to the relevant control/audit) and relevant Certifier is responsible for the implementation of this procedure. Quality Management Representative (QM) is responsible for recording complaints and objections, and monitoring and coordination of corrective and preventive actions after transactions. Complaint and Appeal Committee is responsible for the resolution of objections.

4.0 PROCEDURE

4.1 Definitions

4.1.1 Complaint: At all steps from application to certification decision, written or verbal complaints about USB's policy, procedures, regulations, activities, performances, personnel and certified clients or dissatisfaction statements made to the accreditation body or authorized bodies (T.R. Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, GOTS, TE, UTZ, BRCGS, IFS).

4.1.2 Appeal: Application against audit and/or certification decisions by clients and misunderstanding situation of interested sites and taken decisions of Complaint and Appeal Committee.

4.2 Handling Complaints and Appeals

4.2.1 All kinds of complaints about USB audit and certification activities can be informed as written or verbal with "*Complaint and Appeal Record Form*" or through USB web page.

4.2.2 While receiving complaints, the name of the person / organization of complainant is also recorded. Complaints submitted on behalf of a group, such as a community or labor organization, must have at least one suitable contact person to manage communications and further inquiries.

4.2.3 USB Certification applies an appraisal to assess risk of anonymous grievances, but it is under no obligation to investigate the complaint if there is no sufficient preliminary evidence or information.

¹ USB-PPS: USB Policy and Principals System

4.2.4 All incoming complaints and appeals are recorded and forwarded to the QM to transfer into the "Complaint and Objection Monitoring Form"

4.2.5 QM ensures that all stages until the conclusion of the complaint are recorded in a traceable manner with the " Complaint and Appeal Record Form". If the complaint is in verbal form, the producer/producer organization/entrepreneur/client letter is also attached to this form.

4.2.6 BRCGS is routinely informed about complaints and appeals by the relevant Program Manager. Details can be seen in the "BRCGS040 BRCGS Certification Body Quarterly Report" document.

4.2.7 QM notifies the GM of the complaint and appeal received. GM and QM interviews with parties involved in the complaint (including controllers, auditors, and certifiers) and other persons it deems appropriate. QM ensures that the result and if necessary, the activities to be carried out regarding the complaint is informed to complainant in writing form.

4.2.8 In addition, QM retrospectively reviews the control/audit and certification stages of the parties concerned with complaints and appeals and ensures that any issue that need improvement are used as data for corrective action.

4.2.9 USB Certification ensures the confidentiality of the complainant unless the complainant authorizes USB Certification or the program owner (Rainforest Alliance(RA)) to share the information or the complainant publicly shares information.

4.3 Evaluation of Complaints and Decision Making

4.3.1 QM determines the action plan for the solution of the complaint, after fully getting the reasons, related issues, and events.

4.3.2 Complaints can be in the following situations. Information about the decisions made and in which time period the complaint will be concluded is given in the table below.

- BRCGS requests that complaints shall be concluded within 30 workdays and be claimed.
- RA asks that USB Certification responds to the persons submitting RA complaints and inquiries within 10 calendar days to acknowledge their submissions, and to provide them with information about the next steps in the process and when they can expect an outcome. RA gives 30 calendar days to resolve a complaint. If additional time is needed, Program Manager informs RA on time.

	Complaint	Decision
1	<p>Complaints about office services include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to reach the relevant persons, • Late offer, • Inadequate or inaccessible documents that shall be known by the producer / producer organization / entrepreneur / customer, • Late issuance and sending period of the certificate, etc. 	<p>It is concluded within a maximum of five (5) workdays and the complainant is informed. Corrective action is initiated to prevent its recurrence and to eliminate the root cause, and its effectiveness is measured.</p>

2	<p>Complaints that may affect the impartiality, independence and efficiency of the control include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude and behavior of the control/audit team, • Unethical behavior of the control/audit team. • Any difference in the interpretation of standards • Failure to use appropriate methods in control/audit, • Failure to comply with the control/audit plan, • Control/audit does not provide added value, etc. 	
3	<p>Support requested from USB Certification to remedy the complaints received by the program owners;</p>	<p>Required support in matters such as information / research / audit is provided according to the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regarding BRCGS, "BRCGS005: BRCGS Complaints Investigation Process" -Regarding GOTS, "Approval Procedure and Requirements for Certification Bodies" -Regarding TE, "Accreditation and Certification Procedures"

4.3.3 The evaluation of such complaints is made and remedied at the Operation Meeting with the participation of the General Manager, QM, and relevant personnel. The decisions taken are notified to the complainant in written.

- For complaints about RA, if the submission did not include contact information for responding, then the USB Certification completes the process and record the information in the Rainforest Alliance Assurance Platform.

4.3.4 If the results of the decision are not satisfactory by the relevant parties, the subject of the complaint is forwarded to the Complaints and Appeal Committee by the General Manager.

4.3.5 Complaints about the certified organization; It may be related to the failure to comply with the usage rules of the certificates and logos. Compliance with the principles of confidentiality is essential in the evaluation of such complaints. In special cases where the subject needs to be announced to the public, the form and detail of the announcement is the responsibility of USB Certification, and the legal requirements are followed.

4.3.6 In case of complaints about the products under certification, the certified organization must submit the content and reason of the complaint to USB Certification. It is requested that there are no persons directly related to the complaint within the corrective action proposed by the certified organization and among the persons dealing with the cause and solution of the complaint. Certified organization shall ensure that the relevant authorities are informed about the corrective actions to be carried out, ensure compliance, and prevent repetition of this complaint.

1	The right to use the logo and certificate out of the specified scope	<p>Corrective action is requested within a maximum of 10 days. If the result is negative, the certificate is suspended for one month. If it is again negative, the certificate is canceled.</p> <p>(If the accreditation body/program owner has rules regarding the</p>
2	Misuse of the logo of the accreditation body / program owner	

3	Complaints / feedback from the relevant chambers or professional groups affiliated to or a member of the certified organization	relevant situation, these rules are taken as basis. Details can be seen in the relevant external document.)
4	Complaints / feedbacks from relevant parties benefiting from the certified organization's product	<p>In case of a justified complaint, the continuation of customer satisfaction is maintained by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unannounced audit is performed within a month, • Corrective action is requested within a maximum of 1 month. If the result is negative, the certificate is suspended for one month. If it is again negative, the certificate is canceled. • Taking this situation into consideration in the next control (such as surveillance, document renewal).
5	Complaints from accreditation body, ministries, standard owners	<p>The necessary investigations are made within a maximum of 10 days and the corrective action plan is sent to the relevant party.</p> <p>(If the accreditation body / program owner has rules regarding the relevant situation, these rules are taken as basis. Details can be seen in the relevant external document.)</p>

4.4 Evaluation of Appeals and Decision Making

4.4.1 USB Certification has established a Complaints and Appeal Committee to effectively evaluate all appeals stated below. Working principles of the committee are specified in "*Committee Principal Procedure*"

N	Appeal	Decision
1	Appeal to the control/audit result and/or to the decisions made after the complaint	<p>General Manager firstly ensures that the "<i>Complaint and Appeal Record Form</i>" is filled, and with this form, the appeal and all its stages are recorded in a retrospectively traceable way until the appeal is fully concluded. If applicable, the letter of the appealing party about the matter can also be attached to the form. The General Manager requests for an approval from the appealing party after sending the filled form to them.</p> <p>The Complaint and Appeal Committee makes its decision within five (5) workdays. The decision is sent to the relevant parties in written (referring to the relevant regulation, standard or procedure, sending a copy if necessary), together with its reasons. The decision is recorded to the "<i>Complaint and Appeal Record Form.</i>"</p> <p>As a result of the evaluation, if it is determined that there is a faulty caused by USB Certification, the General Manager is responsible for the preparation of corrective actions, while the Quality Management Representative is responsible for the corrective actions to implement as well as follow-up.</p>

COMPLAINT AND APPEAL PROCEDURE

N	Appeal	Decision
2	Appeal to the non-conformity / observation decision identified by the inspector after the control/audit	<p>In this case, the inspector explains to the appealing party that he/she has the right to appeal and prepares a report. In the report, it is stated that the subject and the party to be controlled have refused to sign. The person who is controlled is asked to sign the report, if not, the report is signed unilaterally.</p> <p>General Manager appoints the Certification Manager to examine the appeal and notifies that decision is taken within five (5) workdays and that it is sent to the relevant parties in written with detailed justifications. As a result of the evaluation, Certification Manager may take the following decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of the inspector's recommendation, • Replacement of inspectors, full or partial control/audit again, <p>Appealing party also has a right to appeal the decision of the Certification Manager. In this case, evaluation is made according to Article 1.</p>
3	Appeal to inspectors who will perform the control/audit	<p>The curriculum vitae of the assigned inspectors to perform the control/audit are forwarded in advance to the party to be controlled. The party to be controlled has the right to appeal to the inspectors.</p> <p>The party sends the appeal together with its justification to the General Manager in written or verbally. The General Manager assigns the task of evaluating the appeal to the Certification Manager. The Certification Manager evaluates the control process in a way that it does not hinder or delay the control process, its impartiality, independence, and consistency.</p> <p>If the appeal is found as justified, the inspectors are replaced, and background information of newly appointed inspectors is sent to the party to be controlled for confirmation.</p> <p>In case the objection is not justified, this situation is communicated in written to the party to be controlled and a further confirmation for the control is requested.</p>
4	Appeal to the certification decision	<p>The inspected party has the right to appeal the certification decision.</p> <p>It sends the appeal together with its justification to the General Manager in written or verbally. The General Manager gathers the Complaint and Appeal Committee for the evaluation of the appeal. The Committee takes its decision within five (5) workdays. The decision is sent to the relevant parties in written (referring to the relevant regulation, standard or procedure, sending a copy when necessary), together with its reasons. The decision is recorded with the "Complaint and Appeal Record Form."</p>

4.4.2 For appeals about RA certification will not be resolved by changing the scope of the certificate to resolve a problem within the scope of the certificate.

4.5 Actions to be Taken Regarding Complaints and Appeals

4.5.1 All complaints and objections received are recorded and kept in the complaints-appeals file. Along with the records, any document or evidences obtained about this subject is attached and kept.

4.5.2 Based on the fact that the party making the complaint and appeal has rights, the complaints and appeals are handled within its own procedure and in the form of revealing the right. All kinds of measures are taken to ensure that the complaint and appeal are not negatively reflected in other transactions of the producer / producer organization / operator.

4.5.3 In this context, the ongoing actions of any complaint and appeal holder are not handled by any personnel subject to complaint and appeal until the complaint and appeal is concluded. The person who worked in the company that made complaints and appeals in the last 2 years is not included in the evaluation of the complaint and objection.

4.5.4 While evaluating the complaints and appeals, the complaints and appeals made before regarding the subject of complaint and appeal are also taken into consideration, and the information contained herein is kept as part of the evaluation. Receiving, processing, and concluding decisions of complaints and appeals are notified to the complainant and appellant in written.

4.5.5 According to the decision taken as a result of the complaint and appeal (generally in cases where the complaint and appeal is justified), corrective and preventive action is initiated regarding the subject of the complaint and objection. The responsibility of initiating this activity is the Certification Manager and the QM. According to the corrective action to be taken, if necessary, activities such as restriction in the appointment of the personnel, providing extra training, etc. are carried out.

4.5.6 In case of an appeal to the decisions taken by the Impartiality Committee, and the Complaint and Appeal Committee, the related party shall be notified of the matter to be referred to TR courts.

4.5.7 QM evaluates all information about the complaints and appeals statistically and brings up these evaluations to the Management Review meetings.

4.5.8 In case that there is still continuation of appeal to the decision taken by the Complaints and Appeal Committee and/or to USB Certification as a result of the complaint or appeal, the solution point is TR Courts. In the event of an objection against the decisions taken by the USB Certification, the appellant is informed that they can appeal to a higher authority.

- For RA certification appeals, when the client disputes a certification decision or related matter it must agree to first follow "*Complaint and Appeal Procedure*" of USB Certification. In the event that the disagreement continues, client can submit the dispute to the RA grievance procedure. Client which have an appeal must agree that it will only take legal action against the RA upon the final disposition of its dispute through the USB Certification and the RA grievance procedures

4.5.9 Professional liability insurance is activated if the complainant and appellant suffer damage and is justified in its complaint and objection.

5.0 RECORDS

Document Number	Title or Description
UQMS-F-EN-2070	Complaint and Appeal Record Form
UQMS-F-EN-2080	Complaint and Appeal Monitoring Form
BRCGS005	BRCGS Complaints Investigation Process
UQMS-P-EN-2070	Committee Principals Procedure
UQMS-P-EN-2050	Complaint and Appeal Procedure
SA-R-GA-2	Rainforest Alliance Rules for Certification Bodies